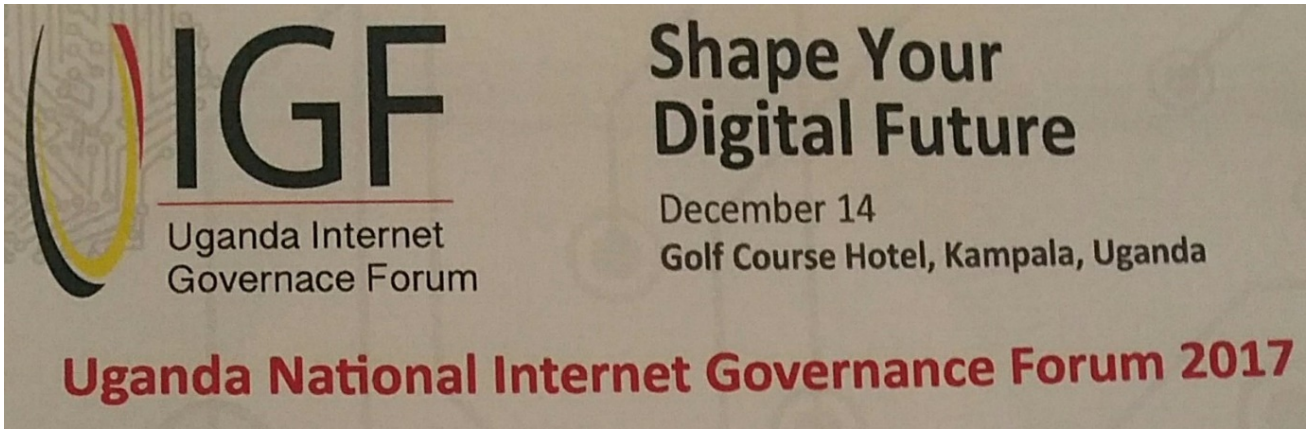
Shaping Your Digital Future: Uganda National Internet Governance Forum 2017



Introduction

The Uganda Internet Governance Forum (UIGF) is a multi-stakeholder meeting that brings together representatives from government, civil society, academia, technical community, private sector and individuals interested in Internet Governance (IG) issues. The objectives of the UIGF are to: Establish IG issues relevant to the Uganda; Build consensus on national and regional positions around relevant IG issues and create awareness about various IG issues including online safety in Uganda especially among vulnerable users.

Since its inauguration in 2006, the UIGF has continued to discuss and address Internet Policy issues pertinent to the country.

The UIGF 2017 attracted 111 participants from different stakeholder groups.

Session One: Welcome Remarks and Key Note Address

Ms. Lillian Nalwoga, the Chairperson of Internet Society Uganda Chapter welcomed participants and thanked them for coming.

In her welcome remarks, she stated that this year, ISOC celebrated 25 years of internet activism which is aimed at creating a safe, free and secure internet. She briefly gave a recap of 2016 Uganda Internet Forum IGF that was held under the theme 'Internet as a tool for peace and development in Uganda. She further explained that last year Uganda held general elections and there was a repeated call to for.

She briefly listed some of the key issues and recommendations from the 2016 Forum which included- government commitment to support ICT innovation, need for more investment in ICT sector to boost, Infrastructure sharing and gender inclusion.

Ms. Vivian Dambya, Director Technical Service, NITA-U gave a keynote address on behalf of Hon. Frank Tumwebaze, Minister of ICT and National Guidance. In her key note address, Ms Dambya, described the Uganda's digital future and gave a historical perspective which is characterised of three waves. The first wave was dominated by the telecoms sector and internet was preserve of big

companies and was mainly used for email communication. The second wave involved liberalisation of telecom companies and as such small companies, universities and individuals started accessing internet and today ordinary citizens can access internet everywhere via their smart phones. The third wave is now characterised by innovation, information and disruptions.

She further shared that government is making progress in promoting technology innovation which includes; the establishment of the innovation fund, reaching out to innovation hubs by providing subsidized or free internet in major towns in the country.

She however acknowledged the challenges innovators face such as low internet uptake and lack of local content relevant to different internet users. To this, it was heard that government is implementing e-government by providing services online through the http://ecitizen.go.ug portal as a way of increasing local content online.

On the issue of security and privacy, she mentioned that the government has established the National Information Security Infrastructure to ensure that government information is protected, in addition to having the cyber laws such as the Computer Misuse Act, 2011 and a draft Data Protection and Privacy Bill.

In her conclusion, she emphasized that the future of internet is an internet which provides un limited possibilities.

Reactions/ Questions

Some of the questions that were raised by participants are; what is government doing to drive local content? How is government handling citizen's privacy online without the legal framework? How is the government preparing and delivering digital content for the future especially for children preparing young children to learn to code? How is government supporting young innovators especially the licence fees for short codes which is not affordable?

In her response, Ms. Dambya stated that some of the challenges raised are structural and was optimistic that they will be addressed by the innovation fund that was established to support young innovators. She further explained that the government is in the process of integrating all management information systems in all agencies and these will be open so that innovators can access and create services. She also mentioned that the Ministry of ICT implementing a court management system that will reduce paper work in the Judicial system.

Session 2: The Future of Innovation, Big Data and Analytics

This session explored how Uganda is utilising the current innovation technology trends such as big data. One of the innovation that was highlighted during the discussion was Mobile Money and how it has greatly impacted on business. It was mentioned that Mobile Money transactions stand at 44 trillion almost doubling the total National budget. This figure speaks volume in terms of social and economic transformation.

In terms of innovation, Makerere School of Technology and Engineering is also training and supporting innovators as one way of building a future network of innovators to support big data.

Challenges facing innovation and Big data analytics in Uganda were also highlighted and they include; Quick revolving technology, lack of knowledge and skills to use the internet, lack of standardisation and harmonisation of innovations, lack of forward and backword linkage between users and innovators as well as lack of spaces and infrastructure to do design thinking.

Suggestion on how to overcome these challenges include; the need to embrace technology in its entity, need for mentoring of innovators on how to create business ideas out of their innovations.

Cyber Security and the Future of Internet in Uganda

During this session, challenges facing cyber security were discussed and they include; Lack of coordination among relevant agencies since cyber security crimes cannot be investigated by a single agency; poor reporting culture among Ugandans, lack of awareness on cyber security issues such as online privacy.

It was also discussed that cyber security is a human rights issue that affects the rights of ordinary citizens to have rights to privacy and freedom of expression; and it is beyond financial loss because it can lead to loss of lives.

Uganda in addition to having cyber security laws, the country has established the National Information Security Group. However, there was a concern that these laws especially the Computer Misuse Act has been mostly used to curtail freedom of expression and not to fight cybercrime. Participants therefore called for progressive laws that are aimed at protecting the rights of citizens and not to favour one party and disadvantage others.

On the other hand, it was emphasised cyber security starts at personal level and participants were encouraged to understand the basics of cyber security and basic control on cyber security. Other suggestion that were presented include; the need to building a cyber security conscious society, formation of regional security blocs at government levels, setting up digital forensic laboratories among others.

Session 4: Gender Inclusion and The Future of Internet In Uganda

Although there have been efforts to include women in science and technology, the gender gap has not been closed. During this discussion, it was revealed that few women participate in technology innovation events that are organised by OutBox Uganda.

To close this gap, education and internet was pointed out as game changers in achieving gender inclusion. Furthermore, technology enabled education was emphasized.

Other strategies that were identified include - creation of safe spaces where women and girls can learn and acquire skills, self-awareness, change in policies that recognise gender dynamics as well as role modelling.

It was also greed that gender is not only about women and men but also includes other disadvantaged groups and called upon the Internet Society Uganda Chapter to include the Youth and Refugee groups.